

Bibliographical Miscellany—I. On ambiguity in author abbreviations

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In the course of the preparation of a biography of the late Dr. Anstruther Davidson (*Madroño* 2: 124–128, 1934) I noted certain bibliographic confusion with regard to the citation of author abbreviations. Some further jottings along a similar vein made subsequently are here briefly discussed.

A. Davidson, author of more than fifty species and varieties of Californian and Arizona flowering plants, might conveniently be cited "Dav." but complications may arise from this practice. Dr. W. L. Jepson directed my attention to the fact that there seemed to be no competition for this abbreviation among the names of botanists. His examination of the works of Pritzel, Gray, Rydberg (where scholarly registers of authors are given on at least two occasions (1917 and 1932) by Dr. J. H. Barnhart), and Britton showed no apparent confusion arising from names with the three initial letters D-a-v. There is, however, one conflict offered by the name of the American pteridologist, George Edward Davenport (1833–1907), which is abbreviated in Willis' extended list of abbreviations (1931) as "Dav." It might be avowed that since the respective fields of work of the two botanists are so wholly discrete, Davidson at no time publishing, to my knowledge, a species among the Pteridophyta and Davenport likewise not entering the phanerogamic field as phytopographer at any time, that it is idle to consider the coincident abbreviation.

It is worth while, nevertheless, to direct attention to the matter in the interest of attaining as early and complete uniformity as possible in the matter of author abbreviations.

Two objectives are borne in mind in the use of such abbreviations. Primarily, an abbreviation to be useful must be truly an abridgement designed to reduce the bulk of the whole, terse and clear, and not simply a lopping of the final letters of an author's name to afford a scant em or two per description. To illustrate, the name of the salicologist Andersson (1821–1880) is docked to "Anders.", in which case there's collision with the abbreviation for Thomas Anderson (1832–1870), director of the

botanic garden in Calcutta, or is scarcely bettered by the form "Anderss."—oddly enough the less used of the two forms though decidedly preferable. To return, the second objective, quite fully elaborated by Hitchcock (1925) p. 19, is naturally the avoidance of possible ambiguity. It is with this safeguard against "driving either" of two or more ways through botanical literature that we are immediately concerned.

Davenport is abbreviated in all works examined by me to the form "Davenp."—a clear, explanatory form. This abbreviation then is useful and free from misinterpretation. But since the danger of confusion in such trisyllabic names as Davidson, Anderson, Robinson, and so forth, is obviated on all occasions by spelling out these authors' names no abbreviation is recommended. In the case of "Davidson" its use in unabbreviated form has been well established by Abrams (1923) in all instances save occasional synonymy, by the Index Kewensis and the Gray Herbarium Card Index.

Another example of identical abbreviations as a possible source of error was noted recently in *Nepeta hederacea* (L.) Trevisan, abbreviated in the Index Kewensis (2:305) and appearing elsewhere (doubtless copied) as "Trev." This abbreviation is variously said to stand for Treviranus (1779–1864) or for Trevisan de Saint-Léon (1818–1897) or ? "Trevisano" of Willis' list (1931) p. 6. The last two explanations doubtless represent the same author but the first name is obviously distinct; the resultant confusion is apparent.

It may be noted that two-syllable names are quite generally abbreviated without a large chance of ambiguity, as "Chapm.," "Rupr.," "Trel." or "Hitchc." The last example illustrates another common neglect—the omission of initials when these would be useful, especially when one considers the increasing international character of systematic botany with the greater diffusion of printed matter and plant materials to foreign study centers. There the workers may be quite unfamiliar with an author whose name appears on a label or in a floristic work and the initials aid unquestionably in such situations. The duplication of rather infrequent names among botanists, aside from direct descendents, is certainly uncanny. Thus we must be concerned with A. S. and C. L. Hitchcock, with T. J. and J. T. Howell, with Thomas Nuttall and L. W. Nuttall, and with N.

L. Britton and James Britten (it is inadvisable to abbreviate these names, when standing alone, to "Britt."—a too prevalent practice).

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